NASA Astromaterials Curatorial Facility (1/2005)

Any samples of extraterrestrial planetary materials returned by Discovery missions must be delivered to the NASA Astromaterials Curatorial Facility located at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, TX. Investigation teams will be responsible for all aspects of the delivery of such materials to this facility, which will be given the task of providing for the physical security, inventory accountability, environmental preservation, and distribution of the samples in support of scientific research programs organized around each mission, including sample processing in support of the mission science team. NASA shall keep the remainder in pristine condition for research competitively proposed by the community at large.

Funding for use of the Curatorial Facility, including laboratory construction or modification, must be included in the budget for the proposed mission. The anticipated costs of sample curation are based on the following guidelines:

The Curatorial Facility currently houses the Apollo lunar samples, Antarctic meteorites, stratospheric cosmic dust, and Genesis solar wind collections in separate laboratories. These laboratories are class 10 to class 1000 clean rooms that operate under strict contamination protocols appropriate to the specific sample characteristics. By 2008 the curation of new samples from the Stardust comet mission and Hayabusa asteroid mission is anticipated. Samples from any new mission must be kept physically isolated from the current and anticipated collections to preclude cross-contamination. Isolation may require the construction of new laboratories or modification of existing facilities.

The actual costs for all aspects of curation specific to a new sample return mission will be borne by the mission from inception through two years following sample return. Costs include personnel, construction or modification, and operation under full-cost accounting principles. Costs are anticipated to be minor during the planning stage, but rise sharply during the construction of the facility two years before and active curation for two years after sample return.

Any requirements for special sample containment and handling beyond those needed for scientific purposes will be determined prior to launch by the NASA Planetary Protection Officer in accordance with NPD 8020.7E "Biological Contamination Control for Outbound and Inbound Planetary Spacecraft" or the current revision. The additional curation costs generated by any such special requirements will be borne by the mission.